



DIETARY BEHAVIOR HEALTH RISKS AMONG RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

*Rhode Island Department of Education
in collaboration with the
Rhode Island Department of Health*

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This summary highlights selected information on dietary behaviors which affect health risks among Rhode Island high school students, based on results of Rhode Island's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in each of 46 participating states and territories nationwide. It was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 the 84-item multiple choice YRBS was administered to 1,528 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12. With a response rate of 60.0%, results of the survey can be considered representative of all Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12.

For additional information or a more detailed report contact Cynthia Corbridge, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2106 or Jana Hesser, Ph.D., Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-2550.

K *KEY FINDINGS*

- ✓ 29% of students described themselves as slightly or very overweight. Female students (36%) were more likely than male students (22%) to consider themselves overweight. Females (62%) were also more likely than male students (25%) to have tried to lose weight during the 30 days preceding the survey. Females were also more likely than males to try to lose weight or maintain their weight through dieting (49% vs. 16%) or exercising (68% vs. (40%).
- ✓ 68% of students had eaten fewer than the recommended five or more servings per day of fruits and vegetables (fruit, fruit juice, green salad, or cooked vegetables) during the day preceding the survey. Female students (71%) were more likely than male students (65%) to have eaten the recommended five or more servings per day of fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ 33% of students had eaten more than two servings of foods typically high in fat content (hamburgers, hot dogs, or sausage; french fries or potato chips; cookies, doughnuts, pie, or cake) during the day preceding the survey. Male students (43%) were more likely than female students (23%) to have eaten two or more servings of high fat foods. Of all students, 60% had eaten cookies, doughnuts, pie or cake, and 54% had eaten french fries or potato chips, once or more in the day preceding the survey.
- ✓ Compared to students nationally, Rhode Island students were more likely to have eaten the recommended five or more servings per day of fruits and vegetables (71% vs. 68% nationally), and less likely to have eaten two or more servings of high fat foods (33% vs. 38% nationally) in the day preceding the survey.

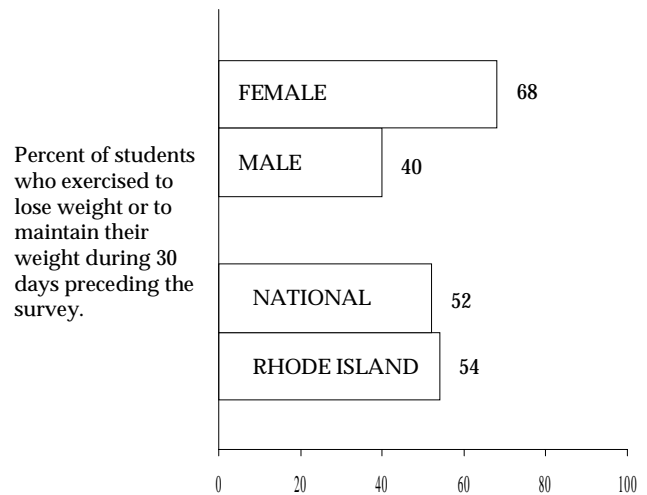
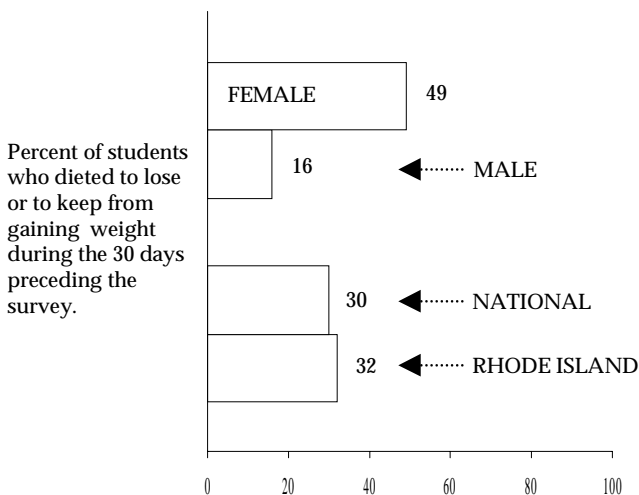
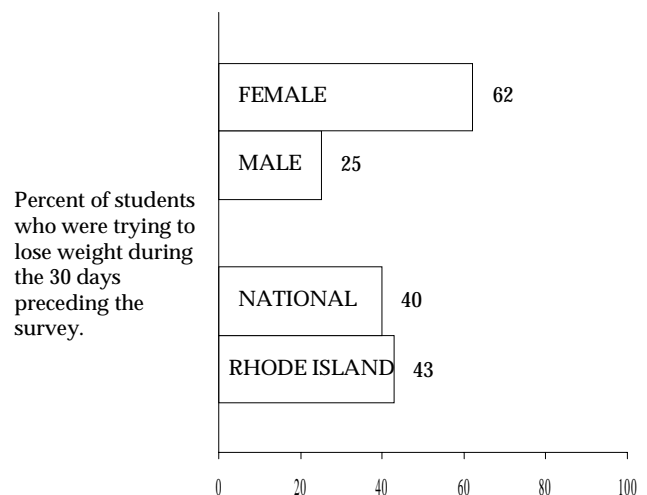
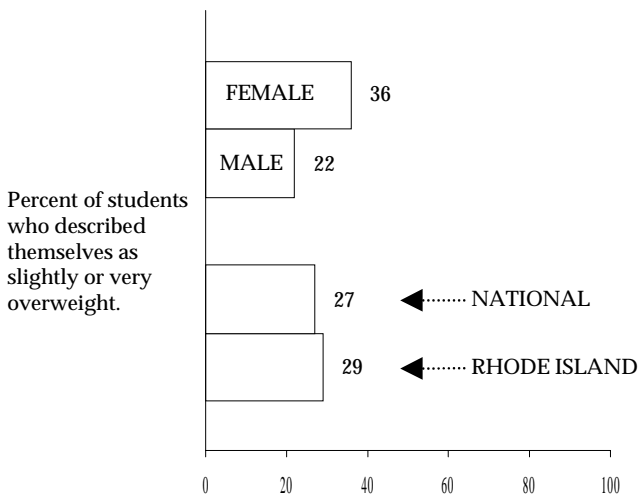
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Dietary Behaviors

Risk Behavior: Weight loss behaviors

Rationale: Self-perception of and efforts to modify body weight can include behaviors that may lead to eating disorders and other health problems. Obesity and extreme obesity appear to be increasing by as much as 39% and 64%, respectively, among adolescents aged 12 - 17. Obesity acquired during childhood or adolescence may persist into adulthood, increasing later risk for chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some types of cancer, and gall bladder disease. In addition, children and adolescents often experience social and psychological stress related to obesity. Obesity in adolescence has been related to depression, problems in family relations, and poor school performance. Overemphasis on thinness during adolescence may contribute to eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Adolescent females represent a high-risk population for the development of these two health problems and compose 90% to 95% of all patients with eating disorders.

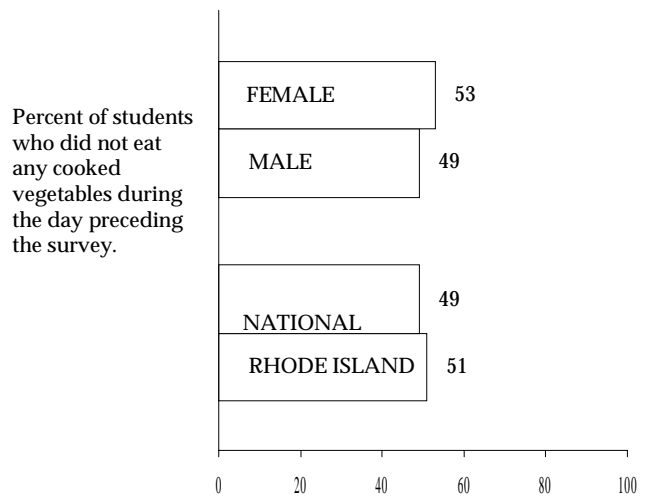
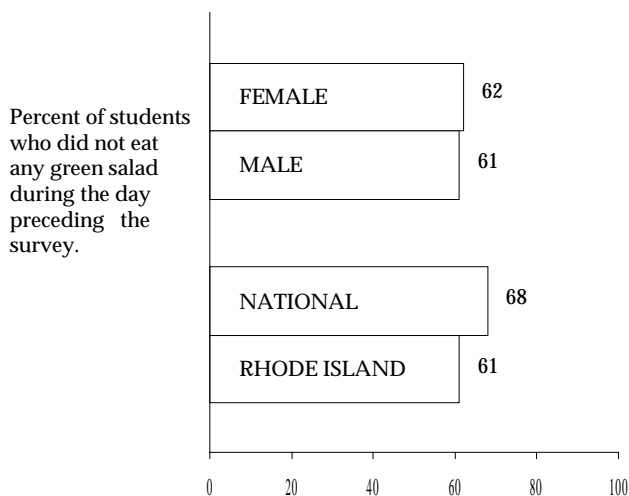
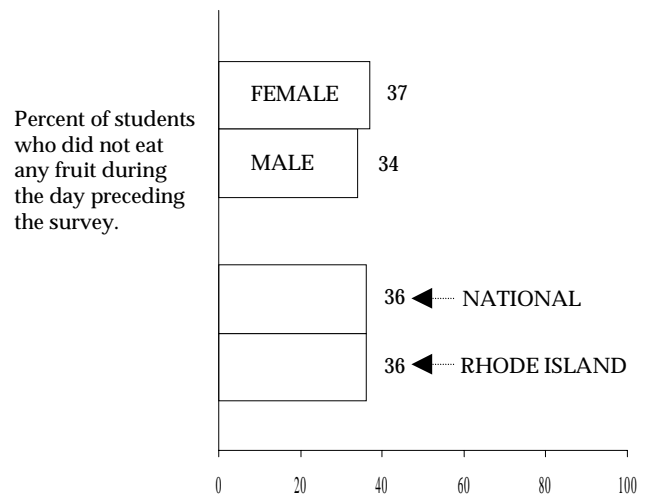
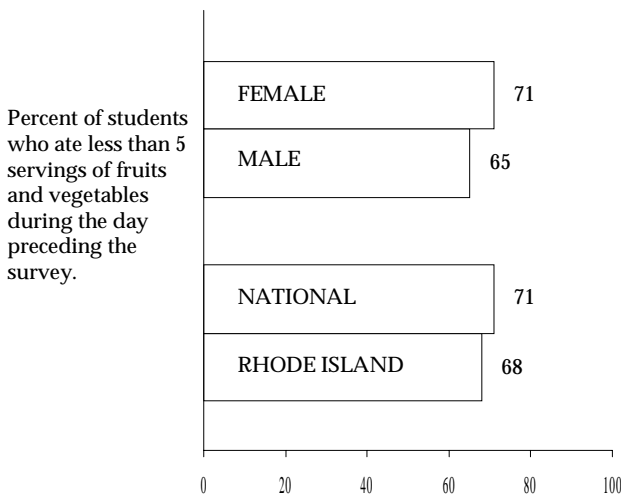


Dietary Behaviors

Risk Behavior:

Low fruit and vegetable consumption

Rationale: The proportion of cancer deaths at least partly attributable to diet has been estimated to be about 35 percent overall. Cancers of the lung, prostate, colon-rectum, breast, and pancreas account for most cancer deaths in the United States, and all are thought to be associated with dietary factors. Excessive consumption of fat and calories and insufficient consumption of fiber and anti-oxidant micronutrients may be the most important dietary risk factors for cancers. Dietary patterns demonstrating higher intake of vegetables, fruits, and grains are associated with a variety of health benefits, including lower rates of diverticulosis and decreased risk for some types of cancer. Current recommendations are for everyone to eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.



Dietary Behaviors

Risk Behavior: High dietary fat consumption

Rational: Americans currently consume more than 36% of their total calories from fat. High fat diets, which are associated with increased risk of obesity, heart disease, some types of cancer, and other chronic conditions, often are consumed at the expense of foods high in complex carbohydrates and dietary fiber, considered more conducive to health. Because lifetime dietary patterns are established during youth, adolescents should be encouraged to choose nutritious foods and to develop healthy eating habits.

